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think about that; sure there isn't a shop in Ballyboy that isn't open on Sunday, ("and its worse in Kilcommon," said Pat,) and every one doing his business; and the publicans bustle nor any other day, selling their whisky; and how can it be right for the publican to be selling his whisky, and doing his business, any more than for the farmer to be sowing his ground and doing his? And who ever heard tell of a priest saying it was against the law of God for a shopkeeper to be doing his business on Sunday? But if any one of us goes to earn a shilling on a holyday, to keep the children from dying of hunger, they are ready enough to tell us that it's against the law of the Church, and to put their curse upon us, and to take the bread out of the children's mouths for it; for who will give us a day's work when they do that on us?"

"Well," said Pat, "and isn't it what they would do? Sure it's to think of the Church, and not of the Scriptures, that they want us; and why wouldn't they be harder on us about the laws of the Church, that they make themselves, than about the laws of God, that he wrote in the Bible? But I wonder which will be most thought of in the day of judgment, whether we kept the laws of God himself, or the laws of the priest."

"Well, then," said Jem, "if God's to be the judge, maybe He will think most about his own laws. And if that's to be the way, isn't it better for us to read the Bible now, and find out his laws for ourselves, if the priest is too busy about his own, to tell us what God's laws are?"

"Well, Jem," said Pat, "I'm thinking we'll have to keep to the Bible to know them; and sure enough that's just what I came to talk to you about. Do you mind what I said to you the last talk we had, how the Rev. Mr. Owens asked me would I be ashamed of Christ and of his word; and would I make Christ be ashamed of me? and what he showed me in the Bible about it? Well, I couldn't get it out of my head at all; and it was turning up in my mind every minute, that if I met Father John I'd be ashamed of Christ's Word, and that Christ would be ashamed of me, and I couldn't tell what I would do at all. Well, I was walking along the road on Saturday, thinking what would I do at all if Father John taxed me with reading the Bible; and while I was studying it, who should come up but Father John riding along, and when he saw it was me, he just put up along side of me, quite sudden. 'Is that you?' says he. 'It is, your reverence,' says I; and indeed, it's I that would be glad to say that same time that it wasn't. 'And what are you doing now?' says he. 'I'm working with Mr. Connor, of Kilcommon,' says I. 'That's not what I mean,' says he; 'you know what I mean,' says he; 'what are you doing now?' says he. Well, I didn't know what to say, and I hadn't a word in me at all, good nor bad; and says he, shouting at me, that it would make you afraid to hear him, 'Is it reading the Bible you are?' says he. Well, it just came in my mind that minute—would I be ashamed of Christ's own Word, and would I make him ashamed of me? and my mind was just rizz in me that minute, and so I up and I told him, 'It is, your reverence,' says I, 'reading the Bible,' says I. Well, with that he got so angry you never saw Father John so like himself in all your life; now, you never seen a man so boisterous. And when his reverence got something easy within himself, with letting it out, he says to me, says he, 'And it's the heretic Bible you're reading, going to turn heretic,' says he. 'No, indeed, your reverence,' says I; 'it isn't the heretic Bible, it's only the Douay Bible,' says I. 'And where did the likes of you get a Douay Bible?' says he. 'I got it from the Rev. Mr. Owens,' says I. 'And what business has the likes of him giving you the Douay Bible?' says he; 'why didn't he give the heretic Bible? like a heretic as he is,' says he. 'It's ranted your turning,' says he. 'No, please your reverence,' says I, 'I don't rant none; and sure your reverence,' says I, 'the Douay Bible would not make ranted of us,' says I. 'It's a swaddler you are,' says he, 'and a jumper, and it's to the soup-kitchen you're going,' says he, 'and to hell; and its spiritual prostitution,' says he, 'and its taking bribes you are, and selling your faith, and your soul, and your God,' says he, 'for base lucre. But I'll be up to you now,' says he; 'I'll just give you your choice,' says he; 'there's the Bible and there's me,' says he, 'and which of us can do you most harm?' says he; 'so now make your choice—will you have me or the Bible,' says he, 'or will you give up the Bible or will you give up me?' says he. Well, now, I felt in myself that I was getting bolder and bolder all the time he was talking, and so, when he left a bit of room for me to put in a word, I just says to him, says I, 'since your reverence is so good as to give me my choice,' says I, 'I think I'll just stick to the Bible,' says I. Well, with that he took on so, that you wouldn't believe; and just then there was a parcel of the Kilcommon boys coming up the road, and he just turns to them, and says he, 'This is a souper,' says he, 'and a ranted, and a swaddler,' says he, 'and a jumper,' says he, 'and Judas that sold his soul for soup,' says he, 'and denied his God here to my face,' says he; 'No indeed, your reverence,' says I, 'I got no soup at all, nor nothing else, nor I don't mean to look for any, nor take it if it was offered to me, and indeed it

was not,' says I. 'Well it's going to be a turncoat you are,' says he, 'that none of your people was before.' 'Indeed I'm not, your reverence,' says I, 'if you don't put me out, and turn me yourself; but sure,' says I, 'your reverence won't put me out and turn me only for reading the Catholic Bible,' says I; 'sure don't the Catholic bishops say, in the first page of it, that it's good for Catholics to read, and sure your reverence, it can't make anything bad of me; and so your reverence,' says I, 'may as well just let me alone for reading it, and it's not going to turn at all I am,' says I. But he didn't listen to me at all, but just went on to the boys; and with that they set up a shout after me, that you would hear from that to this, and called me all that Father John called me, and more foreb; and it's I that was glad, when I came to a bit of a loneing, to try to get out of their way as far as I could; and ever so far, I'd hear them shouting ranted, and souper, and jumper, and Judas, after me, that you never heard the like."

"Well, Pat," said Jem, "you're in for it now, anyway; but it's my opinion, if you can only hold out for a while, you'll have a deal of the boys, and myself too, to keep you company."

So if we hear more of what goes on in Kilcommon, maybe our readers will like to know it.

ARE NUMBERS A TEST OF TRUTH?

We would invite the attention of our readers to a few observations upon an argument often urged in support of the truth of the Roman Catholic religion—the *argument of numbers*—which seems to be considered by some as one of the strongest and most practical tests of religious truth. It is not unnatural to suppose that ordinary minds would willingly lay hold of any mode of reasoning which, by affording a *short cut* to the end sought, would relieve them from the toil and anxiety attendant on more detailed and minute inquiries and conscientious examination; and we believe that there are many persons who actually do feel confident that their religion is true, simply because they believe that the numbers of their religion are more numerous than any other.

The question we would now consider is, are there any real and satisfactory grounds for believing the number of the adherents of any religion to be a test of the truth?

As truth is always the same, so we suppose the proof that a religion is true must be of equal force in all times and all circumstances. Can this be said of the argument of numbers?

The religion which God gave to the Jews was certainly true, yet the professors of it were always a very small minority of the inhabitants of the earth.

For many hundreds of years the Christians were a minority in every nation of the world into which Christianity had spread. Did that make men doubt of the truth of Christianity? or if it had, would Christianity ever have extended over the world? Let this fact be well marked—Christianity grew, and converted so many nations, by *despising, denying, and rejecting* this argument of numbers, as a test of religious truth. How, then, can Christianity ever adopt the argument of numbers as the test of its truth?

If Christians, however, at the present day, should be so senseless as to adopt that test in rejecting which the ancient Christians conquered, they would only be condemned by it, for there are still more heathens in China and India alone, perhaps, than there are Christians in the world. God's Word tells us that this shall not be *always* so, but we know that it is so still.

Is the counting up of numbers any better argument among the different divisions which now exist among Christians? There are many who think it is. But what we want to see is, the reason and the truth of it, and how the fact really stands.

How far from home must a man go to count? will it do to count his own parish? and then, by the same rule, have to change his religion if he go into another parish? Will it do to take Ireland, and say, Here are four millions of Roman Catholics and only two millions of Protestants, so the Roman Catholic religion must be true? And, then, what should a man do in England, where the Protestants are twenty to one?

It is clear that if we take this argument at all for our guide, we must take all Christendom, and see who are the most numerous.

Now, is this an easy argument to decide by? How many of those who rely on the proof of numbers could give us even a guess at the numbers of the different divisions of Christians?

For the benefit of those who may fancy this method of deciding the question of religious truth, we give here an estimate of the numbers in almost the whole of Europe, and America besides. We take the population of each nation chiefly from Alison's History of Europe, a work of the highest authority in such matters. We take the proportions of the religious persuasions from various sources, and we think our estimate will be thought fair by those conversant with such subjects:—

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-----|--------------|--------------------|
| France, | ... | 30 millions, | 1-6th Protestants. |
| Great Britain and Ireland, | ... | 30 do. | 5-6th Protestants. |

| | | | |
|----------------|-----|--------|---|
| Austria, | ... | 35 do. | 1-5th Protestants. |
| Holland, | ... | 24 do. | nearly all Protestants. |
| Sweden, | ... | 4 do. | do. do. |
| Norway, | ... | 14 do. | do. do. |
| Denmark, | ... | 2 do. | do. do. |
| Switzerland, | ... | 2 do. | 2-3rds Protestants. |
| Prussia, | ... | 15 do. | 2-3rds Protestants. |
| Italy, | ... | 19 do. | 1-9th Protestants in Piedmont, &c. |
| Spain, | ... | 14 do. | all Roman Catholics. |
| Russia, | ... | 64 do. | 4 millions Roman Catholics, nearly all the rest Greek Church. |
| Greece, | ... | 3 do. | nearly all Greek. |
| Canada, | ... | 14 do. | half and half. |
| United States, | ... | 21 do. | 1-7th Roman Catholics. |

South America, Mexico, and Cuba, 6 millions of European and mixed races, nearly all Roman Catholics. As for the slaves in South America, being kept up by continued importations from Africa, we can hardly count them Christians.

We have not counted here the lesser states of Germany, in which the great majority are Protestants, nor the Greek Church in Turkey, Circassia, Georgia, &c., which are very numerous. Yet how stand the numbers now? Total, 250 millions, of whom are Roman Catholics, 108 millions; Church of England and Greek Church, 142 millions.

We do not rely upon this as a test of truth, but we commend it to the consideration of those who do.

We do not overlook the argument by which these numbers may be met. It will be said that the Roman Catholic Church is, at least, the largest body, taken by itself. We doubt the fact very much. The Greek Church is, perhaps, nearly as numerous. It may be said, too, that the Roman Catholic is the most united in itself. That, too, we deny. We shall take an early opportunity of showing that there are differences in it as great as any that exist among Protestants.

But let us take the argument as it is stated by Bishop Milner, the great English Roman Catholic controversial writer. He says that the word Catholic "is derived from the Greek word which means *universal*, and accordingly it has ever been employed to discriminate the great body of Christians, under their legitimate pastors, and subsisting in all nations and all ages, from those comparatively small bodies of Christians who at certain places, and in certain times, have been separated from it." Are the 142 millions really comparatively small bodies? or can the above be any sound reason for calling the Roman Church Catholic, and refusing to call the Greek Church Catholic, when it is notorious that the Greek Church is as old as the Roman and little less numerous? And when those two Churches parted asunder from each other, the Greek Church was certainly the more numerous of the two.

We place no reliance on this argument of numbers, because we believe it to be false—that is, we think it wholly without proof from reason or Scripture that the division of Christians which can count the greatest number of adherents must needs be right in everything which it holds and teaches.

But we are far from despising or undervaluing the testimony of the great body of the Church, and of Christians in all ages and all countries, to the cause of truth. The multitude in any nation, or in any age, may hold many errors; but that which has the testimony of the Church in all ages, and all countries, is deserving of respectful attention. This is far different from saying that the majority in any one age must be right in every opinion they hold.

Now, is there anything which has had this general and agreeing testimony in all ages? The Catholic creeds, and those alone. THE WHOLE CHURCH, for 1500 years, agreed in testifying that those creeds contained the whole Catholic faith, pure and undefiled. The Church of England, the Greek Church, almost all Protestants agree in this to this day. We might almost claim the Church of Rome herself as still joining in this testimony now, as she did for so many centuries; for the Council of Trent, at their first meeting, recited the Nicene Creed, and testified that it was "That chief thing (*principium*) in which all who profess the faith of Christ do of necessity agree—that firm and only foundation against which 'the gates of hell shall never prevail'."

Yet it has come to be the great question at this day, between the Church of Rome and those who protest against her, whether that creed do or do not contain the whole Catholic faith. The Church of Rome now says it is not enough to hold that creed, unless we also hold what Pope Pius IV. added to it; and they give in this argument of numbers, that the largest single body of Christians at this day do hold that Creed of Pope Pius; and to this we reply, that the whole Church, for 1500 years, and a majority of the Christian Church at this day, and the confession of the Council of Trent itself, do all proclaim that the ancient Catholic creeds do contain the whole Catholic faith, complete and unmixed with error.

Hence it may be judged which of us has the best right to use the argument of numbers, and which of us uses it best.

And yet we do not receive that faith on the authority of any number of men. We receive it because we know alike from creeds and Scripture that it is the faith which Christ and his Apostles taught, and that it has come down to our times from them.

As for the argument of mere numbers, we again say, we distrust it, because we know it cannot stand at the judgment of Christ hereafter; and no argument can be worth anything now which cannot prevail in the judgment then. Suppose any poor mortal should then presume to say to the Great Judge, "I always tried to be of the religion of the majority," will not Christ say to him, with truth, "I gave you this warning from the beginning, and if you had searched the Scripture you would have found it—'Enter ye in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat.' How narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it.'"*

WHAT TRADITION TELLS US OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY—No. III.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA—TERTULLIAN.

IN our last volume we inserted an article, headed, "What Scripture tells us of the Blessed Virgin," in which we printed all the passages of the New Testament in which we found any mention made of her. For the satisfaction of those who might be discontented with the meagreness of the Scripture accounts of her, we determined to publish, in a series of articles, all that we could learn on the same subject from tradition; and we have already given, in two articles, all that we could find concerning her in several Christian Fathers of the first and second centuries. To complete our account of the writers of the second century, it only remains for us to notice the two whose names we have placed at the head of this article—Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian.

We confess that in this examination we have some fear of being tedious. We have brought forward Father after Father only to say—"We can find nothing in this writer about the Blessed Virgin." It must be rather tiresome for a jury, when a counsel puts witness after witness on the table, each of whom has nothing to say but—"I know nothing of the matter you have summoned me here to give evidence about." Our readers may ask—"Why do you not skip over all the Fathers who say nothing about the Virgin Mary, and come at once to those who have something to tell concerning her?" This is the plan adopted by Roman Catholic collectors of quotations from the Fathers. They know very well that, with the generality of people, one Father is just as good as another, and that, if they can produce a strong passage from any one in their favour, few will inquire in what century the writer lived, or whether he invented the doctrine himself or found it in the writings of his predecessors. Accordingly they are quite satisfied if they can produce a sufficient number of Greek or Latin authors in their favour, although, perhaps, they have not brought forward anything to their purpose from any writer who lived within four hundred years after our Saviour's birth.

We, however, think it very little use to inquire what was said on this, or on any other religious subject, in the sixth century, until we have first examined what was said on it in the first and second; for we are not bound to believe every doctrine that any pious person thinks proper to hold, but only such doctrines as he can show to have been handed down to him from our Saviour. We think it will appear, from the present series of articles, that there is still extant enough of works written in the first three centuries to enable us to judge of the views held in their days with regard to the Blessed Virgin. The writers of the works referred to were so eminent that they could not have been ignorant of the doctrines then held by the Church; and the subject is so important that they would not be likely to pass it over in silence, had their views been the same as those now entertained in the Church of Rome. We have more than once remarked before, that we have had many proofs lately, that bishops who believe the Virgin to be the Queen of Heaven—the paramount intercessor with her Son—the most effectual help in all emergencies—do not think it right to abstain from frequently impressing on their people the duty of constantly having recourse to this means of obtaining assistance.

BUT CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA certainly did not think it any part of his duty to give instruction to those whom he taught on the duty of seeking the intercession of the Virgin. This eminent Christian philosopher flourished at the close of the second century, at the head of the great Alexandrian catechetical school, which attained so much celebrity, under the direction successively of Pantænus, Clement, and Origen. The writings of Clement which remain are sufficiently voluminous, and contain much valuable information as to the doctrine of the Church in his time. He speaks in them of our Lord's being born of a virgin, but he does not mention his mother with peculiar titles of honour, nor does he once hint at the addressing of prayers to her. And the following is one of several passages from which

we conclude that in his time the Church offered no prayers to any but the Supreme God:—

"It is the extreme of ignorance to ask from those who are not gods as though they were gods. Whence, since there is one only good God, both we ourselves and the angels supplicate from him alone, that some good things might be given to us, and others might remain with us."—Stromata, Book vii., p. 853, Oxford, 1715. You are not to suppose that the heathen with whom Clement had to argue were so unenlightened as to worship other deities as equal to the Supreme God. They did, indeed, offer prayers to the spirits of deceased virtuous men, or to demons, as they called them. We quote Clement's account of the defence which the heathen made for this practice, and we invite our readers to compare it with what is now said by Roman Catholic divines in defence of the worship of the saints—

"But they think that it matters nothing whether we speak of these as gods or as angels, giving to the spirits of such the names of demons, and teaching that they should be worshipped by men as having, by Divine Providence, on account of the purity of their lives, received authority to be conversant about earthly places, in order that they may minister to mortals."—Stromata, Book vi., p. 755.

Having failed to extract anything from Clement more to our purpose than the passages cited, we proceed next to TERTULLIAN, the celebrated Presbyter of Carthage. Of the general estimation in which this light of the African Church was held, we can give no better testimony than the anecdote which St. Jerome records of St. Cyprian—

"I saw one Paulus, who had seen Cyprian's secretary at Rome, who used to tell him that Cyprian never passed a single day without reading Tertullian, and that he often said to him, 'Give me my master,' meaning Tertullian."—Jerome, vol. iv., part ii., p. 115. Tertullian in his later years became a believer in the pretensions to inspiration of a fanatic, named Montanus. His later works must, therefore, be cited with caution. This circumstance, however, does not affect the value of his evidence on the subject we are discussing, since there is no difference in this point between Tertullian's earlier works and his later, and it does not appear that the Montanists had any disagreement with the orthodox relative to the Blessed Virgin.

Well, then, in all Tertullian we do not find a single allusion to the offering of prayers to the Virgin by any sect of Christians in his time; and, on the contrary, we find that he, as well as Clement, was possessed with the prejudice that prayers should be offered to God only. He says—

"These things I cannot ask in prayer from any other except him from whom I know that I shall obtain; because he is the one who alone grants, and I am one whom it behoveth to obtain by prayer."—Apology, p. 27, Paris, 1675.

And, again, he makes the following remarks on our Lord's command to pray in secret:—"By this precept he required in a man faith to believe that both the sight and the hearing of the omnipotent God are present under our roofs and in our secret places; and he desired the lowliness of faith, that man should offer his worship to him alone who hears and sees everywhere."—On Lord's Prayer, p. 129.

Our business, however, being more particularly with what this Father thought of the Virgin Mary, we shall quote his commentary on one of the passages of the Scripture in which she is mentioned. Although we printed it already, in the first article of this series, yet, to make this Father's comment more intelligible, we print it here again:—

"While he yet talked to the people, behold his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him; then one said unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee; but he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand to his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."—Matt. xii. 46-50.

A Roman Catholic cannot deny that the first view of this passage presents him with difficulties. We find Jesus, who is commonly represented by them as ready to grant anything, no matter what, to the slightest wish of his mother, here refusing even to come out to speak to her; we find him, instead of pointing her out to his disciples as an object of their special veneration, and as holding a place in his dispensation which no other mortal was to attain unto, on the contrary, leading them to suppose that their place in his favour was determined, not by the closeness of their earthly relationship to him, but by their readiness to do his Father's will; and we find the Virgin Mary herself, instead of being among the most attentive hearers of his Son's discourses, "standing without," and summoning him away from his preaching. To those, therefore, whose principle it is to interpret Scripture according to the consent of the Fathers, we feel that we shall be doing a service if we lay before them what some of the most eminent of them have thought of the passage we have just referred to.

The following is Tertullian's comment on it (De Carne Christi, vii., p. 315):—

"But what reason is there for the answer which denied his mother and his brethren? The brothers of our Lord had not believed on him, as it is contained in the Gospel. His mother, in like manner, is not shown to have adhered to him; whereas other Marys and Marthas were often in his company. By this passage, finally, their unbelief is made evident. Whilst he was teaching the way of life, whilst he was preaching the kingdom of God, whilst he was engaged in curing sickness and evils, at a time when strangers were fixedly intent upon him, these persons, so nearly related to him, were absent. At last they come up, and stand outside the door, and do not enter—not thinking, forsooth, of what was going on there; nor do they wait; just as though they were bringing something more urgent than the business in which he was engaged—nay, moreover, they interrupt him, and endeavour to recall him from so great a work."

"Now I pray you, Apelles, and you, Marcion, if perchance, when you were playing at chess, or disputing about players or charioteers, you were called away by such a message, would you not have said, 'Who is my mother and who are my brethren?' And whilst Christ was preaching and setting forth God, fulfilling the law and the prophets, dispersing the darkness of so many eyes, did he undeservedly employ this saying, to strike at the unbelief of those who stood without, or to shake off the importunity of those who were calling him away from his work?"

The same writer says elsewhere on this passage—"Christ with reason felt indignant, that whilst strangers were bent intently on his discourse, persons so nearly related to him should stand without, seeking, moreover, to call him away from his solemn work."—Adv. Marcionem iv. 19, p. 433.

Here, then, we have Tertullian putting on the anecdote recorded in the Gospels the construction the least respectful to the mother of our Lord. He represents her as, at the time, not being a believer in her Son; he speaks of her absence from his preaching as censurable, and her attempt to interrupt him as deservedly calling forth the rebuke which it met with. When we find an eminent writer of the second century adopting views so unlike those now entertained in the Church of Rome, it is proper to ask—Does he fairly represent the sentiments of the Church in his day? Now, as we have pointed out the fact, that Tertullian became a schismatic in his later years, we think it necessary to show that his interpretation of this passage was that adopted by distinguished writers for very many years after; and though it somewhat interrupts our following the chronological order, we shall give the comment of St. Ambrose and St. Chrysostom on the same passage.

St. Ambrose says (vol. i., p. 1392)—"Whereas our Lord was about to instruct others, that one who would not leave his father and mother is not worthy of the Son of God, he first subjects himself to this same rule; not that he might disclaim the kindnesses of maternal piety (for his own rule is, He who honoureth not his father or mother, let him die the death), but because he acknowledges that he owes more to the mysteries of his Father than to the affections of his mother. Nor are parents unjustly discarded here; but the ties of the mind are represented as more obligatory than the ties of the body. They ought not to stand without who seek to see Christ; for if parents themselves, when they stand without, are not acknowledged (and, perhaps, they are not acknowledged, for an example to us), how shall we be acknowledged if we stand without?"

But Chrysostom's comment on the same passage uses far stronger language (vol. vii., p. 407, Benedictine edition, 1718):—

"What I lately said, that if virtue be absent all besides is superfluous, this is now proved abundantly. I was saying that age, and nature, and the living in a wilderness, and all such things, were unprofitable unless our principle and our purpose were good; but to-day we learn something more, that not even the conceiving of Christ in the womb, and bringing forth that wonderful birth, hath any advantage if there be not virtue; and this is specially manifested from this circumstance—'Whilst he was yet speaking,' says the Evangelist, some one says to him—Thy mother and thy brethren seek thee; and he said, who is my mother and my brethren?' Now, this he said, not because he felt ashamed of his mother, nor with the intention of denying her who brought him forth—for had he been ashamed he would not have passed through her womb—but it was to show that she would derive no advantage from this unless she did her duty in everything. Now, what she was then undertaking was the effect of excessive ambition; for she wished to show to the people that she commanded and controlled her son, she having as yet formed no high opinion of him; consequently, she comes to him unseasonably. Now, see the foolish arrogance both of herself and of them!" Whereas they ought

* Let our readers should entertain any doubt as to the accuracy of our translation, we give the original text of this sentence, with a Latin version—

Kai gar hyper lexichorise, philotimias hn perittēs.

* Matthew vii. 13, 14, Douay Bible.